



Save the Children

Rewrite the Future

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO BRIEFING



Right: Serge, 13, who used to be a child soldier, attends class at Goma Child Transit Centre in eastern DRC.

Far right: A tailoring class for former sex workers at Save the Children's partner organisation in Creoidaj, Kinshasa.



“Because my parents don’t have to pay for my studies, I can go to school. I study so I can become a teacher and help other children.” Kalemie, 13, South Kivu district, DRC.*

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is one of Africa’s largest countries, rich in minerals. But forty years of poor governance, economic collapse, exploitation and civil war have left millions of Congolese children and their families without access to healthcare, clean drinking water, or education. As a result, child mortality and illness rates, and the number of children out of school, are among the highest in the world. The first elections since independence from Belgium in 1960 took place in 2006, but ongoing sporadic conflict in DRC is still preventing sustainable progress for children. We are working to help the DRC government rebuild both schools and the finance systems to support education.

The issue

Access: not enough places to go round

Thousands of out-of-school children have been involved with armed groups, 40 per cent of them girls. All need immediate access to quality education. Girls are chronically under-schooled, in contrast to similar neighbouring countries.¹ This is worst in districts most affected by conflict. There is just one school for every five villages in rural areas, where most people live.² Even where there are funds to build schools, lack of skills has stopped this happening.

The solution

Ensuring places for all

- Support accelerated learning programmes to give basic education to older children who have never been to school or who dropped out, especially girls and those involved with armed groups.
- Highlight discrimination towards girls’ education and help recruit more female primary teachers to reassure parents.
- Help rehabilitate schools in remote and sparsely populated areas and provide building materials.

* Her name has been changed to protect her identity.

The issue

Quality: Education without motivation

The quality of teaching is poor, following decades of neglect of teacher training. Education policy is poorly planned, and the scarce resources, such as learning materials, are used inefficiently. This results in 11–17 per cent of pupils having to repeat the year³ and up to 25 per cent of children dropping out in the first year. Only 25 per cent of pupils complete primary education.

Protection: Danger, violence and disease cast a shadow

Many children have been forcibly recruited to armed groups, as soldiers, forced into 'marriages' or as servants. The Government's schemes to demobilise them and help them rejoin their families often exclude girls, who have to recover physically and psychologically on their own. High numbers of children are affected by HIV and AIDS, and 20 per cent of 10–15-year-old girls (or more among the poorest and those with no schooling) are mothers of at least one child.

Finance: An ignored need

Public spending on education is only six per cent of the Government's annual budget, or \$4 per pupil.⁴ Parents have to fund most of the education system themselves, including the costs of local and central infrastructure, paying between \$14 and \$32 to send their child to school. This cost is beyond the reach of more than half the families in DRC. Attempts to waive fees for the poorest directly reduce teacher salaries and resources. Teachers in the rural east receive a salary of just \$3 per month.⁵

The solution

Active learning with trained teachers

- Help produce a teacher training method that can be reproduced at provincial level and that gains real and sustainable change in teaching through children's active participation in class.
- Provide essential classroom materials such as blackboards, textbooks, maps and charts, chalk, exercise books and slates.
- Help transform school management systems so they are better able to improve the quality of teaching and the learning environment.

Strong, healthy and safe

- Encourage children involved with armed groups and other vulnerable children to join school or alternative education. Help them regain status in the eyes of peers, and gain confidence and skills to cope with the world beyond school.
- Show schools active peace-building methods in the classroom. Introduce life-skills education, such as learning about landmines, HIV and AIDS and sexual health.
- Help improve girls' safety, by finding ways to recruit more female teachers.

Ensuring investment for the future

- Press for increased state finance for education, particularly for teachers' salaries, administrative support and skills development.
- Help widen the ways schools are financed, to include contributions from the whole community and revenue from new, local or provincial taxes.
- With partners, seek ways to increase household and community incomes – such as agriculture plots – to better finance local education and contribute directly to local school funds.

How the Democratic Republic of Congo measures up

- Over three million primary age children (6–11 years old) are out of school
- Over six million 12–17-year-old adolescents are out of school
- The net enrollment rate in primary school is only 17%⁶
- Only 25% of enrolled children complete primary school⁷
- Only 56% of girls enroll, compared to 72% of boys⁸
- 60% of teachers have had no training⁹
- Public spending on education is only 6% of the annual budget¹⁰

"It's important for me to go to school because when I look at the people who have had an education, they seem happy and I know that they have everything. If I don't study, I fear to be a child in the street and rejected." Israel*, 15, Bukavu, DRC

*His name has been changed to protect his identity

References:

1. Le système éducatif de la R.D.C.: Priorités et alternatives, World Bank, Working Paper series; no 68, January 2005, p. 49 2. Ibid p. 58. 3. World Bank (2005: 104) 4. Ministry of Economic Planning (2005: 19) 5. World Bank, op cit, pp. 72; 78 6. Ministry of primary, secondary and professional education (2004) – The status of the Congolese primary, secondary and professional education sector. 7. Ibid. 8. World Bank (2005) on 2002 data. The last population census was in 1984, making it difficult to estimate current gross and net enrolment rates. 9. World Bank (2005: 104) 10. Ministry of Economic Planning (2005: 19)

All costs quoted are in US\$

SIFA'S STORY

“When the men took us away they wouldn't let us leave”

Sifa* is 15, and her childhood has been dominated by conflict. After her family was chased away from their village by soldiers, Sifa was recruited into the militia where she spent three years. She was sexually abused, and now has a one-year-old son. “The violence started when the war began. The boys started to take the girls by force. I have borne a child into the world because of that violence.”

“My father is a nurse, my mother an assistant teacher. We lived in our community normally but suddenly the enemies came. They killed my sister and the child of my aunt.”

It is common for children to get involved with the militia when normal life is so disrupted. “We were tired of their attacks and the war. Children were dead. Parents were dead. There was no school. Everything was bad and in chaos. Instead of waiting to become exterminated, we thought it best to become active combatants,” she explains. “My ‘husband’ was the first man I knew. I was eleven or twelve years old.”

Save the Children works to demobilise children, reunite them with their families and improve their chances of accessing education.

Right: Sifa* in a child rehabilitation centre in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

* Her name has been changed to protect her identity.



ANNA KARI

“My parents were very happy that I came home. I am also very happy to be home because I am still a child and I should go to school.” Sifa*, 15, Ituri district, Democratic Republic of Congo

Help us rewrite the future of education in the Democratic Republic of Congo.



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO MEETING THE CHALLENGE

We aim to increase the number of children – especially girls and those involved with armed groups – enrolling in school and to help more of them complete formal education. We will help introduce accelerated learning to speed older children through school. We will build schools, provide facilities and help communities support education.

Our target

We need the international community to create a climate where the Democratic Republic of Congo can deliver its education targets for 2010. We will support the Congolese government as it works to:

- increase its funding for education to 25% of national budget
- bring all children formerly involved with militias back into their schools and communities
- close the gender gap in education.

Our direct practical work with community and government partners will help 79,000 more Congolese children go to school by 2010, and offer these plus 184,000 others a better and more relevant education.

Save the Children is putting huge resources towards these aims. We need to raise a further \$14 million from our partners and supporters. The issues are complex, the solutions must be versatile. Above all, the world must take seriously every child's right to an education.

We will regularly monitor our work in the DRC, tracking enrolment, attendance and class sizes. We will also monitor the government's relative spend on education. Donors will receive reports of our progress in December 2006, October 2008 and December 2010.

Help us meet the challenge

Save the Children will work in practical ways to address the availability and quality of schooling for many of DRC's most vulnerable children. Here are some examples of how your support might help.

Access: Ensuring places for all

- \$2 million could supply materials and teach local volunteers to build and repair classrooms.
- \$12,500 could give 500 children access to education for a year.

Quality: Active participation with trained teachers

- \$500,000 could train teachers to deliver accelerated learning classes.
- \$150,000 could help 100 parent/teacher committees guide improvements to teaching.

Protection: Strong, healthy and safe

- \$1 million could promote sports, recreation, and teaching on safety.
- \$500,000 could train 10,000 teachers in children's rights and child protection.

But we cannot do everything. Although the DRC has a plan and targets for education, the government does not give it enough resources. We will also press the government to:

- increase state financing for teachers' salaries and administrative support
- allow new local or provincial indirect taxes to raise money for education.

All costs quoted are in US\$

To join our challenge, visit

www.savethechildren.net/rewritethefuture

Left: A 15-year-old girl in a class at a Save the Children-funded child transit centre in eastern DRC.



ANNA KARI